



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BRAMBLETYE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Brambletye Preparatory School

Full Name of School	Brambletye Preparatory School		
DfE Number	938/6251		
Registered Charity Number	307003		
Address	Brambletye Preparatory School Lewes Road East Grinstead West Sussex RH19 3PD		
Telephone Number	01342 321004		
Fax Number	01342 770197		
Email Address	headmaster@brambletye.com		
Head	Mr Nigel Westlake		
Chairman of Governors	Mr Andrew Hynard		
Age Range	2 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	264		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (139 boys; 125 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	2	5-11: 146
	3-5 (EYFS):	32	11-13: 84
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	189	
Number of Boarders	Total:	75	
	Full:	61	Flexi: 14
Inspection Dates	10 Mar 2015 to 12 Mar 2015		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing primarily on compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS). The inspection occurs over a period of two and a half continuous days in the school.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended. This inspection focuses on the school's compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgement.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors conducted formal interviews with boarders, held discussions with senior members of staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended registration sessions. Inspectors visited the boarding house and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and boarding pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Bridget Windley

Reporting Inspector

Mr Michael Hewett

Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Head, ISA school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Brambletye Preparatory School is a co-educational day and boarding school for boys and girls aged from two to thirteen. Originally founded in 1919, the school relocated in 1933 to its current 140-acre site in East Grinstead. The school buildings have developed around a Victorian House that provides the accommodation for up to 95 boarders. The school operates as an educational trust overseen by a governing body. The current headmaster was appointed shortly after the previous inspection, and also since that time a recent change in the management structure within boarding has seen the introduction of house parents for both the boys and the girls.
- 1.2 Opportunities exist for children in Years 3 to 6 to board either full-time or for occasional nights. In Years 7 and 8 boarders are expected to board on a full-time basis only. At the time of the inspection the total number of pupils was 264, of whom 139 were boys and 125 were girls. There were 61 full boarders (41 boys and 20 girls) and 14 flexi-boarders (3 boys and 11 girls). The school has identified 17 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, and 16 pupils speak English as an additional language. Boarders are mostly drawn from professional and business backgrounds within the local area and further afield from south London. Approximately a quarter of the boarding community come from overseas and are from a range of ethnic backgrounds.
- 1.3 Brambletye aims to develop happy, confident and well-adjusted pupils, who work hard, have a love of learning and take a full share in the corporate life of the school. It seeks to place strong emphasis on high standards of manners and good behaviour, and for the principles of a Christian upbringing and worship to have a strong influence in day-to-day activities. The school strives to enable all pupils to excel in an area or subject so that they can gain confidence and self-esteem, a sense of respect and responsibility, and an enthusiasm for learning and living.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.1 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Monitor the procedures for the issuing of sanctions in order to ensure greater consistency.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI in March 2012, at which time the school did not meet the National Minimum Standard to ensure that dormitories are of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of the boarders. This has now been satisfactorily rectified.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

3.(a) Boarding provision and care

- 3.1 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.2 Boarders are introduced to the school through a supportive induction process, including the provision of mentors, known as shadows. All boarders have a choice of staff they can turn to for support, help and guidance. Many said in interviews that the support given by their peers is a strength of the boarding experience. Boarders are provided with details of an independent listener, in addition to contact numbers for national sources of support. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire a very large majority of boarders said that they enjoy boarding and know what to do if they are unhappy or worried. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Arrangements for pupils who are unwell provide for medical care to be given, by suitably qualified and experienced staff, in appropriate and dedicated separate sick rooms for boys and girls. Appropriate care is provided for boarders with specific medical conditions or disabilities. The staff administer medicines when needed. Such medicines are securely and systematically stored, and detailed records are kept. Arrangements are made for access to local specialist health services when needed and a local doctor holds weekly surgeries in school. The confidentiality of boarders is respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders have regular exeats and during term time can contact their families with ease. They widely use email, and telephones are provided in both boarding areas and around the school. Arrangements are made for boarders from overseas to use the internet to have visual contact with their parents. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 The accommodation is clean and well maintained. Over the last three years, significant improvements have been made to the boarding areas, with substantial refurbishment of the dormitories. The regulatory failure noted at the previous inspection regarding accommodation has now been fully rectified. Discussions with pupils and staff show that they are appreciative of the quality of the accommodation, which is light, spacious and homely. The washing facilities and toilets in the boarding house provide appropriate privacy. Boarders are able to personalise their dormitory space. Suitable areas are provided for boarders to complete their homework and undertake more private study, as well as comfortable and well-resourced communal areas for them to gather together. Boarding accommodation is reserved for the sole use of boarders and protected from access by unauthorised people. The boarders' privacy is not compromised by the presence of the school's security cameras. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 The meals provided are wholesome and prepared in hygienic surroundings. Menus are carefully planned to ensure that a balanced nutritional diet is provided and they offer choice and variety. All meals are served in the school's spacious dining hall, which is close to the boarders' accommodation. Boarders with special dietary requirements for medical or religious reasons are catered for individually. Boarders can access snacks and drinks at frequent times during the day and evening. A food committee meets regularly and, where appropriate, changes are implemented. In response to the questionnaire a minority of boarders disagreed that the food is good and that they are happy with the availability of snacks and drinking water outside meal times. From both observation and first-hand experience the inspectors found that the food and snacks provided are suitable. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 Appropriate laundry provision is made for bedding and clothing. Boarding staff ensure that boarders receive their own laundry. Provision is made for boarders to purchase items of stationery and other essentials. Boarders have lockable tuck boxes for storing personal items. Valuable items are kept by the school. A minority of boarders felt that their non-valuable possessions are not always secure within their dormitories. The school is aware of these concerns and the pupils reported in discussions that successful measures are being taken to address these issues. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 A wide-ranging programme of activities is available during evenings and weekends, for example clay-pigeon shooting, and adventure activities in Ashdown Forest. There are many safe recreational areas where the boarders can choose to be together or alone. In discussions, boarders spoke enthusiastically about how these opportunities are part of what makes boarding enjoyable. In their questionnaire responses a small minority of boarders reported that they were not happy with the balance of free time and activities in the evenings and at weekends. In interviews, however, they explained that they had recently lost some free time to extra production rehearsals and they confirmed that usually the balance is suitable. Inspection evidence supported this view. Information from newspapers, television and a current affairs display board enable boarders to keep up with events in the world outside. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school places a high priority on ensuring that all necessary measures are in place for the health and safety of the pupils. The health and safety committee meets termly to assess risks for all areas of the buildings and grounds. Detailed risk assessments are carried out for the frequent trips outside the school for boarders. The written health and safety policy is reviewed annually and signed off by the chairman of governors. Regular checks of equipment cover all aspects of safety. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school meets all its statutory responsibilities regarding fire precautions. Fire drills are held regularly, both during the day and in boarding time, and boarders and staff are fully aware of the appropriate evacuation procedures. Records are up to date and kept efficiently. Fire risk assessments are suitably reviewed by external consultants, and fire equipment is maintained and checked at suitable intervals. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The policies for safeguarding and child protection are known to staff at all levels and are implemented consistently. Regular training for all staff is provided and appropriate records are kept. Those with particular responsibilities maintain close links with the local safeguarding children's board. The school governors review and ratify the child protection policy on an annual basis. In response to the questionnaire all parents reported that the boarding environment keeps their children safe. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Good behaviour is encouraged and promoted, both by suitable policies and through clear role modelling by staff and senior pupils. Procedures are understood by the boarders and appropriate behavioural records maintained. In response to the questionnaire, just over half of boarders indicated that teachers are not fair in the way they give sanctions. In discussions they reported that this is not an issue in the boarding house, but mostly in the daytime. The inspectors confirmed through interviews with both staff and boarders that there are some discrepancies in the

issuing of sanctions. A very small minority of boarders commented that the school does not deal with bullying behaviour. Inspectors found that anti-bullying procedures are reinforced through assemblies and personal, social and health education. Parents in their questionnaire indicated that the school deals well with any case of bullying. All incidents of unkind behaviour are recorded in detail, appropriately monitored and dealt with effectively. As required, the school has appropriate policies in place for the use of physical restraint and for searching pupils and their possessions, which include useful guidance for staff. [NMS12]

- 3.14 Recruitment processes are rigorous and the single central register of appointments is accurately maintained. Samples of staff files scrutinised indicate that all necessary staff checks are undertaken before appointment. There are no adult members of staff households residing on site who are not employed by the school. Visitors to the school do not have access to the boarding house, except with the permission of house staff and under supervision. The school does not appoint guardians. [NMS 14]

3.(c) Leadership and management of the boarding provision

- 3.15 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 The school has a detailed statement of the principles and practice of boarding, which is provided on the website for parents and in the boarding houses for the pupils. All parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed overwhelming satisfaction with the leadership of boarding. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Recently introduced management structures are strengthening the boarding experience for the pupils. The governors value boarding and a dedicated governor strongly supports the newly developed systems. Boarding staff are suitably trained and induction procedures are clear. Gap Year students play a significant role in the boarding house. Links between the pastoral and academic staff are effective, maintained formally through regular staff meetings and informally through daily communication. Required records are suitably maintained and stored. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All staff working with boarders have clear job descriptions, access to appraisal and opportunities for professional development. Supervision ratios are appropriate and duty staff are suitably experienced. At all times, boarders know who is responsible for them and staff know the whereabouts of boarders in their care. The school has an appropriate policy for missing pupils. Several members of staff are resident in the house overnight and boarders know how to contact the member of staff on duty. Suitable adult accommodation is separate from that of the boarders, and pupils do not visit staff accommodation. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders are treated equally, with due respect for religious or cultural backgrounds and dietary needs. Those with particular pastoral needs receive appropriate care and support to enable them to participate in school life. In discussions, all boarders reported that staff treat them without discrimination. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 A minority of boarders reported in response to the questionnaire that they do not feel the school asks for their opinions and responds to them. Inspection evidence did not support this view. Inspectors found that boarders' opinions are gathered through regular boarding house meetings, the school council, a food council and suggestion boxes. An example of a request that has been granted is the introduction of more non-uniform days for charity. [NMS 17]

- 3.21 A complaints policy is available for all parents. Records show that formal complaints are handled in line with the school's published procedures. Any concerns regarding boarding are invariably dealt with at the informal stage by house staff. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Prefects, house officers and dormitory captains assist house staff in the smooth running of the house and they are given suitable training and supervision. Their job descriptions require them to act as role models and provide support for their juniors. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for any boarders. [NMS 20]